

A man with a beard and dark hair, wearing a grey long-sleeved shirt, is standing in a modern office or studio. He is looking down at a large digital display or table that shows a colorful, abstract graphic. His hands are resting on the edge of the display. In the background, there are orange structural beams and a large window. The overall atmosphere is professional and creative.

# RECRUITING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE UK

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# TODAY'S SESSION

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- Why recruit international students in the UK?
- Where are UKI students & how do we identify them?
- Challenges & Guidance





# UKI SURVEY FINDINGS

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- UKI recruitment primarily sits within the international recruitment team
- Universities do have a budget for UKI, but often it is combined with another budget
- Universities do not have targets for UKI recruitment or a recruitment strategy
- UKI is a growth market for universities (with and without additional budget)
- International teams do provide support/guidance to UK teams on UKI students (e.g. data sharing, covering events)
- Challenges include:
  - Data around UKI students
  - Identifying / locating UKI students
  - International-specific queries, e.g visas, qualifications, fee status
  - Differentiating UKI students from UK students and developing tailored content/activity for UKI
  - Quality of UKI students (e.g. their educational background prior to coming to the UK for FE)
  - Expectations of UKI students (high aspirations versus actual achievement)
- What you want to learn:
  - How to identify, target and engage UKI students
  - Best practice for how UK and international teams can work together
  - How to advise regarding fee status

# WHY RECRUIT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE UK?

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# BENEFITS

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## Hot leads!

- UKI students are here because they want to get a place at a UK university
- Demonstrated ability to afford the fees

## Diversity

- UKI students come from a large variety of countries

## Cost

- UKI students are 'low-hanging fruits' - easy to access and at minimal cost

## Quality

- Many UKI students are studying in high-achieving schools with recognised and accepted qualifications (A Levels, IB)
- UKI students tend to have higher levels of English owing to time spent in an English-speaking environment

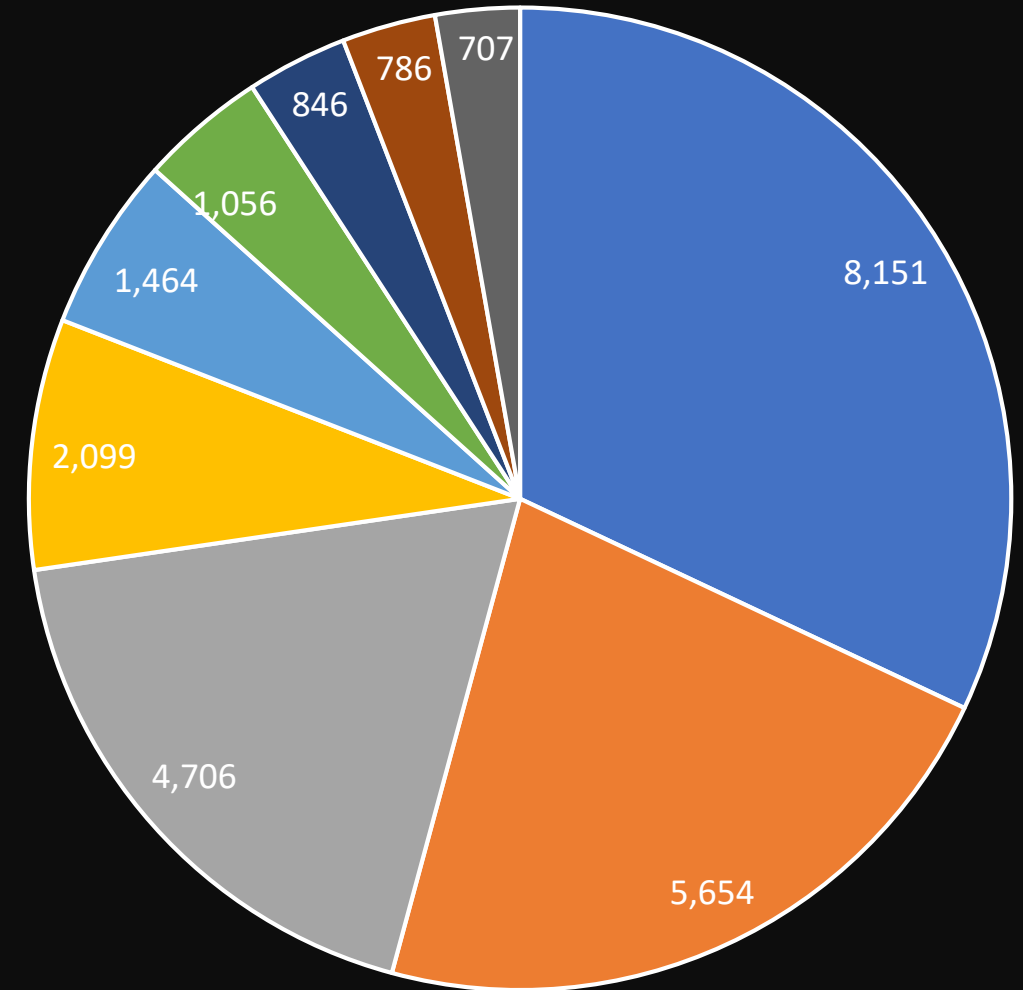


A photograph of four students in a laboratory setting. A person in a white lab coat is partially visible on the left, gesturing towards the students. Three students (two women and one man) are looking intently at a piece of scientific equipment, possibly a microscope. A fourth student is partially visible on the right. The background shows laboratory shelves and equipment.

**WHO AND WHERE ARE UKI STUDENTS?**

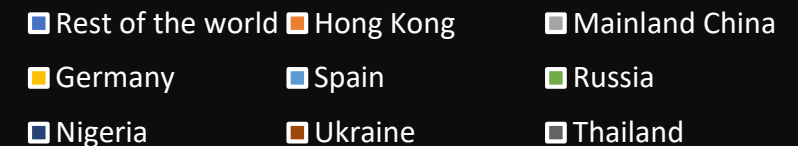
# WHO?

- No single source of accurate data which covers the whole of UKI
- The Independent Schools Council (ISC) is a useful source of information, with an annual census
- The ISC 2022/23 Census provides the following insights:
  - A total of 25,469 international students at independent schools in the UK
  - 68% of students come from only 8 countries
  - 22% of students are from Hong Kong
  - 18% of students are from China



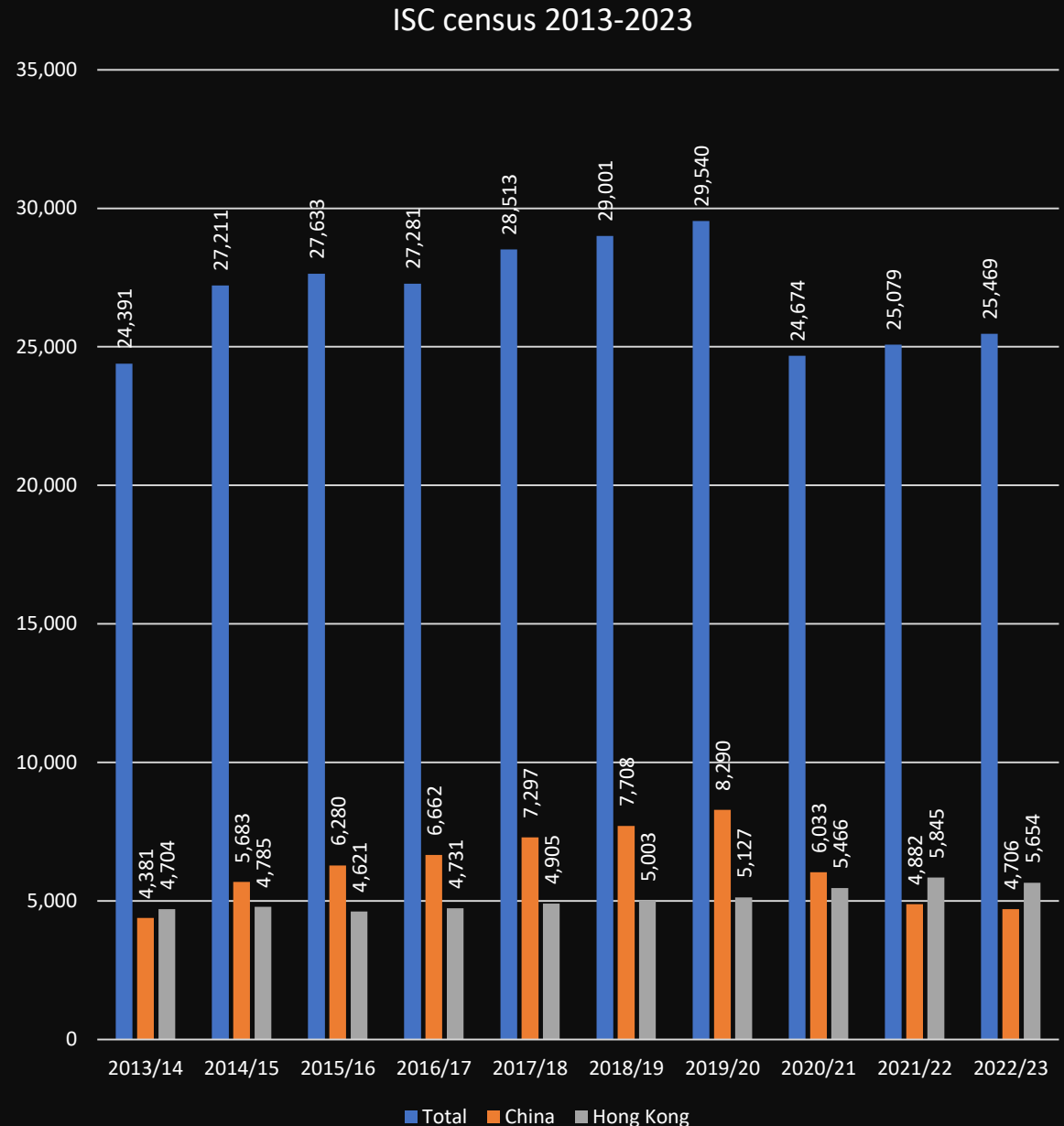
Source: ISC Census

<https://www.isc.co.uk/research/annual-census/>



# WHO?

- The past 10 years of data show:
  - Steady growth overall until 2020 (COVID)
  - Significant growth from China (+90% between 2013 and 2019)
  - Steady intakes from Hong Kong (>5k students for the past 5 years)
- Source: ISC Census  
<https://www.isc.co.uk/research/annual-census/>





## WHERE?

- UKI students are typically located in one of the following education establishment types:
  - Independent schools (as shown in the ISC data)
  - Private pathway providers e.g. international foundation programmes
  - English language preparation centres

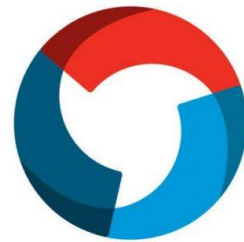
**INTO** 

**NCUK**  
THE UNIVERSITY CONSORTIUM

**ONCAMPUS**  
Achieve more.



**Kings**  
Education for Life



**Study  
Group**

**KAPLAN** 

# WHERE?

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There are a number of membership organisations which you can refer to in order to identify UKI students.

- British Association of Independent Schools with International Students' (BAISIS)
  - Over 130 member schools
  - [www.baisis.org.uk](http://www.baisis.org.uk)
- Boarding Schools Association (BSA)
  - Over 600 member schools in 40 countries (a large number of UK schools)
  - [www.boarding.org.uk](http://www.boarding.org.uk)
- Council of International Schools (CIS)
  - 870 member schools in 116 countries (11 schools in the UK)
  - [www.cois.org](http://www.cois.org)



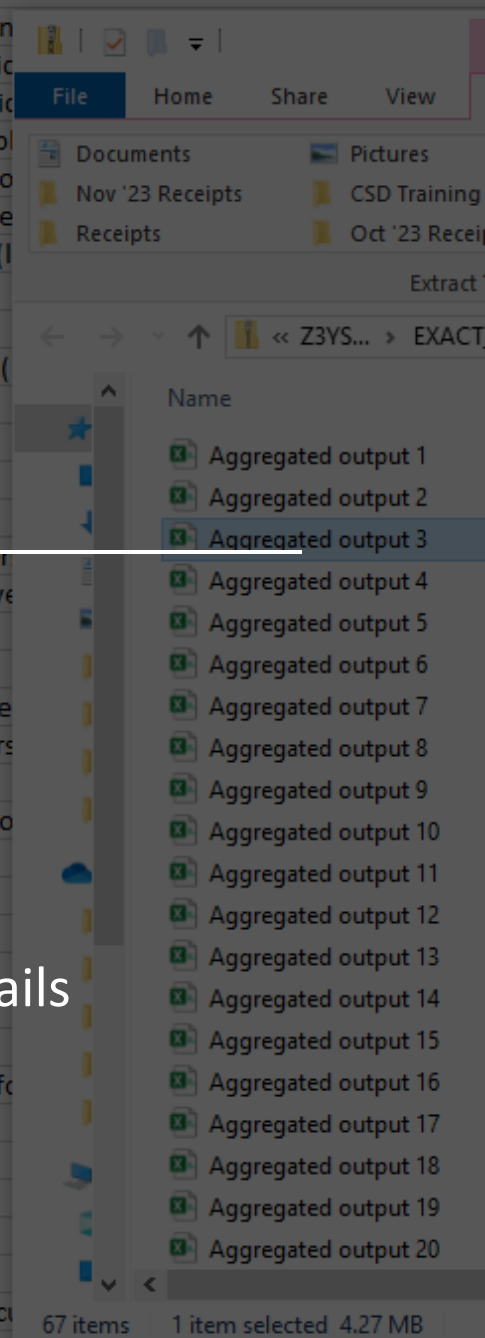
A young woman with dark hair and glasses is smiling broadly, looking upwards. She is wearing a red cable-knit sweater over a white collared shirt. A black strap, likely for a backpack, is visible over her right shoulder. She is standing in front of a large, vibrant mural. The mural features bold, abstract shapes in red, white, blue, yellow, and pink. The scene is set in what appears to be an indoor or semi-enclosed space with a dark floor and ceiling structure visible in the background.

# CHALLENGES AND GUIDANCE



# UCAS DATA & UPDATES

- UCAS application data – Changes are coming!
  - Nationality questions (and clarification re. Nationality vs. Ethnicity)
  - Current visa/immigration status in the UK questions
  - Clarification re. Postal address vs Home/permanent address
  - More detailed 3 year education history inc. additional school address details
  - Review of help text



# CHALLENGES

## Other data

- Sector data (lack of)
  - HESA data cannot identify UKI students
  - BUILA has not conducted any surveys
- Internal data. What filters do/can you use?
  - Fee status
  - Address (UK)?
  - Postcode (only UK for this field)?
  - School?
  - Agent?
  - What about EU students?!

*This will depend on which fields your university has imported from UCAS!*

## Lack of international experience

- Confidence dealing with international-specific questions, including:
  - Visas – recruitment staff are not trained to deal with visa queries. Refer students to your student support team!
  - Fee status – depends on personal circumstances and not easy to answer. Refer students to [UKCISA.org.uk](https://www.ukcisa.org.uk) for guidance
  - Student support – do you have a dedicated international student support team? If so, find out a little more about their services
  - Scholarships – most universities will have this info on websites to promote so have a look at your international pages
  - English language qualifications – again, this info will be on your international web pages

# CHALLENGES

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## Resource

- No dedicated UKI team/resource
- 'tag on' to existing responsibilities
- Lack of budget and time



## Blurred Lines

- Division of responsibilities / remit / regions
- Who is the most appropriate contact?
- What are the implications for the schools / agents?
- Clearly establish where UKI students sit against individual targets & KPIs



## A diverse audience

- A varied mix of nationalities, qualifications and experiences – not a homogenous audience
- Lack of tailored marketing
- UKI sits outside of 'typical' student personas/target audiences
- How to differentiate between a UK and UKI student at the same school?

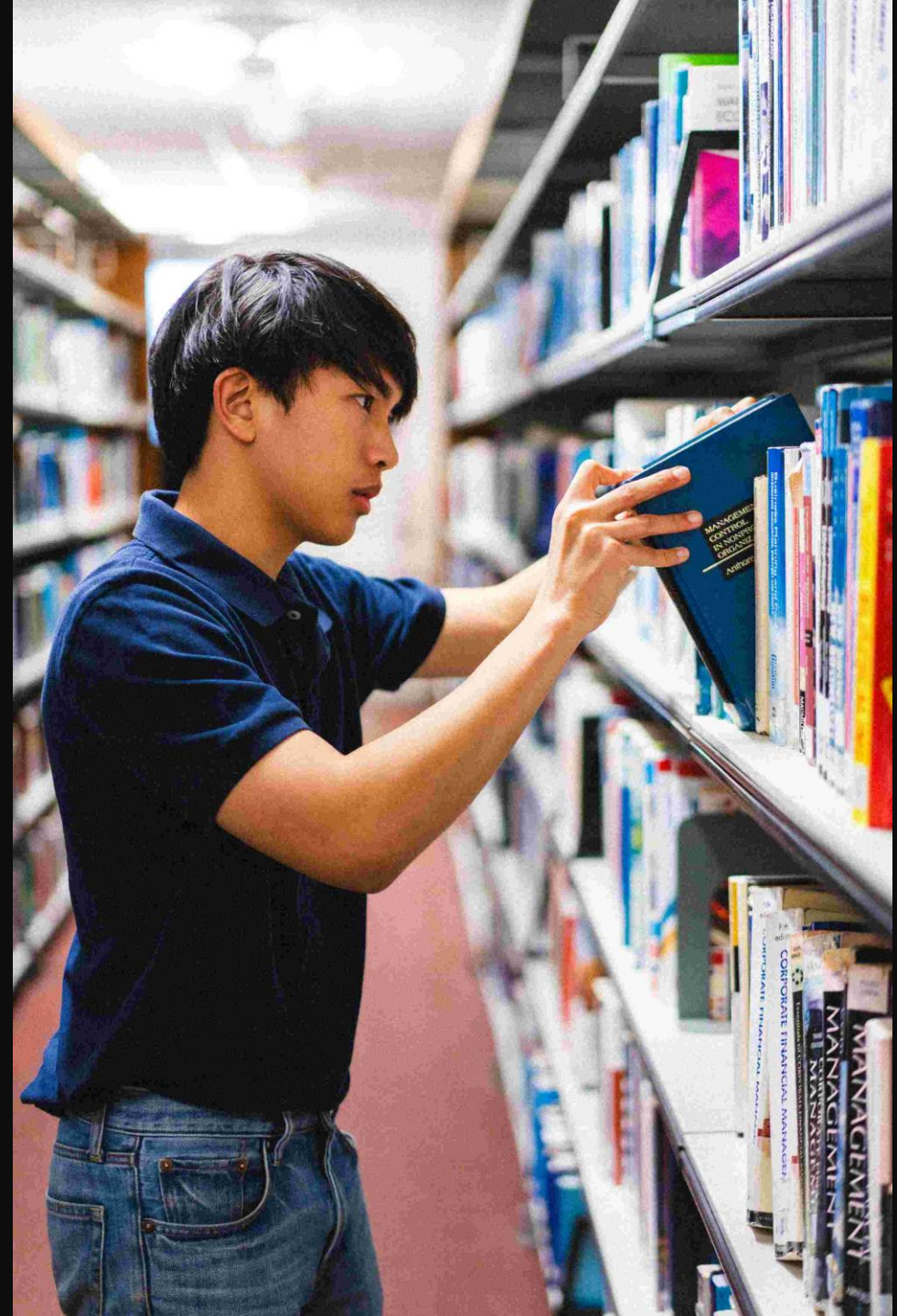


# PRACTICAL GUIDANCE

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## Training

- Access to and training on a variety of international qualifications (particularly for courses which have specific GCSE requirements)
  - 'Attendance' at international recruitment events (support at virtual events)
  - Invite your international recruitment team to join a UCAS fair (learn from them)
  - Join international recruitment mailing lists and communities, e.g. BUILA and UKI Forum
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# PRACTICAL GUIDANCE

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## UK & International Team-work

- Don't know the answer to a UKI question? Agree a process for referring enquiries to your international team
  - CRM / communications segmentation: liaise closely with your international team and marketing team to review and adapt where necessary/possible
  - On-campus events: involve your international team as UKI students may attend!
  - Virtual events: collaborate with your international team to make the offer suitable for as many target audiences as possible (UKI students may *not* attend on-campus events!)
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# LOOK OUT FOR



## Agents

- There are agents in the UK who support UKI students with their applications (primarily at postgraduate level) – who should be visiting/account managing these agents?
- Some FE education institutions also seek commission-based contracts for student referrals (varying practice across the sector) – would this benefit your university?



## Events in the UK

- UKI students may attend UK-based recruitment events, particularly when seeking postgraduate studies, e.g. PostgradLIVE, Russell Group Roadshow, FindaMasters Virtual Study Fairs
- SI-UK London (agent fairs)
- Kings Education fairs
- UCAS fairs in 'high-concentration' cities (Cambridge, Oxford, London, Brighton, Birmingham, Cardiff, Manchester)



## Progression Agreements

- Particularly for foundation providers who seek not only recognition and acceptance of their qualifications but who also want 'guaranteed' offers for their students (to use in their own recruitment and marketing literature)
- Letters of Recognition (LoRs) are common practice
- Such agreements can
  - strengthen the relationship with education providers
  - Enhance university visibility in the pre-foundation market