



Uzbekistan – United Kingdom Education Forum

May 15-16, 2025

organised in partnership with the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovations of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the British Council, Uzbek Embassy in London, the University of Westminster, London South Bank University, Westminster International University in Tashkent.

The third Uzbek-UK Education Forum was held on 15-16 May 2025.

Key partners:

1. The Ministry of HE, Science, and Innovations of the Republic of Uzbekistan
2. British Council
3. Uzbek Embassy in London
4. British Embassy in Tashkent
5. University of Westminster
6. London South Bank University
7. Westminster International University in Tashkent
8. TEAM university

Venues of the Forum: London South Bank University, University of Westminster and Uzbek Embassy in London.

The event took place prior to the Education World Forum in London on 18-21 May 2025 [Home - Education World Forum](#)

The Forum was the third in the series and aimed to address core priorities for Higher Education in Uzbekistan and the UK, and highlight key ways in which these priorities are being delivered, including through transnational educational (TNE) collaborations. The impact of Higher Education partnerships will be a focus throughout.

Context:

1. Education one of the major priorities; quality education is the only way for the new Uzbekistan
2. Widening access to HE; target 50% of school graduates will benefit from HE
3. Access to quality education for students with disabilities, female students and those from low-income families
4. Uzbek Universities aim to partner with foreign universities listed in top HE rankings and more dual award/TNE programmes are encouraged.

The objectives of the Forum included:

1. To respond to national Higher Education reform and internationalisation agendas by addressing how universities ensure excellence in governance and quality assurance
2. To discuss how universities respond to the requirements of global and local markets, engage employers and strengthen industry collaborations
3. To outline concrete steps towards inclusive higher education, through a presentation of partnership reports from Uzbekistan and UK universities
4. To agree key priorities for further UK-Uzbek TNE collaboration and explore how UK-Uzbek TNE collaborations and international learning can support wider HE developments in Uzbekistan.
5. To provide a platform for partnership development discussions to be taken forward.

The event brought together 60 delegates from the UK and 60 delegates from Uzbekistan to share ideas, thinking, and expertise. The delegations included Uzbek Government officials, invited VCs, DVCs and PVCs from universities in the UK and Uzbekistan, and representatives from the private sector, international agencies, and think tanks. The UK HE sector was represented by University College London, London South Bank University, Workwhile Gateway Qualifications, Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education, University Vocational Awards Council, Mindful Education, Change School, QAA Global, Nottingham Trent University, University of Westminster, University of Lincoln, UUKi.

Future collaborative opportunities between Uzbekistan and the UK and developments in higher education policy were areas of attention throughout the Forum. As part of the Forum, 14 MoUs around strategic collaboration between Uzbekistan and UK were signed.

On the first day, the forum was opened with welcomes from Prof Deborah Johnston, London South Bank University, and Denise Waddingham, director of the British Council Uzbekistan. Prof. Deborah Johnston said transnational education — or TNE — plays a crucial role in this transformation. Our partnerships with Uzbek institutions are more than academic; they are pathways to shared development. Through joint programmes, faculty exchanges, and co-designed curricula, we are fostering a new generation of students who are both locally rooted and globally competent.

The first session was chaired by Tim Bodley Scott, Strategic Alliances Director, University College London, and Hikmat Abdurahmatov, Co-Founder and CEO, TEAM University, and looked at the role of university-industry partnerships for better employability and sustainable change. The session participants were Kristina Kerwin, Graduate Teaching Assistant and Lead of the LSBU Energy Advice Centre, Abdumalik Djumanov, Rector, Pharmaceutical Technical University; Muzaffar Karabaev, Founder and Investor; Gulnara Otten, Head of Post-Award and Project Management, London South Bank University; and Aygul Mynbaeva, Youth Academy Leader. Panel members highlighted their experiences and included points such as ensuring SDGs are being met and creating positive change, the importance of entrepreneurship skills, and the importance of industry/university co-operation and links. Panel members discussed how the industry/university relationships are used, ranging from business development opportunities and using academic expertise to drive innovation and growth to the student-led LSBU Energy Advice Centre which also feeds into helping local communities. The session key takeaways are that university teaching needs to be increasingly industry relevant, businesses do not respond well to traditional academic language, any collaborative proposals need to become more business focused, and students need to develop more real-world skills, with the curriculum becoming more integrated. Moreover, there is sometimes a lack of trust between industry and academia; sometimes there is a sense that industry can be quite secretive. This trust can be regained by doing some of the following: giving alumni the opportunity to become ambassadors, co-creating courses with industry, involving PSRBs where possible, having industry liaison committees, jointly publishing research between academia and industry, and ensuring that research is focused on industry needs and solves a problem.

The second session was on the theme of Integrating Apprenticeships (Dual Education) and Entrepreneurship into Higher Education: Navigating Policy and Sharing Best Practice from the UK and Uzbekistan, chaired by Sammy Shummo, Group Director of Apprenticeships, LSBU.

The last session was on the theme of how universities prepare students for jobs of the future. The speakers mentioned that up to 65% of the youth today will work in industries that do not yet exist (source: World Economic Forum Future of Jobs Report); the role of teaching is to be transformed into a role of facilitation — there should be openness to experimentation; the government of Uzbekistan holds 81.6% of all assets of the bank, and 62.3% goes to five state-owned banks; universities should change their role and not just only

issue diplomas: they must also create feelings of happiness and readiness for the future; and it is important to re-evaluate what failure means and look towards models of co-learning and co-creation (e.g., 50% teaching and 50% learning by experimentation). In Uzbekistan, cyber law will be a big future career field due to digitisation, new technology, and virtual reality.

At closing remarks Stuart Bannerman, Pro Vice Chancellor International, LSBU Global said that The future of education will not be built by institutions working in isolation. It will be shaped by networks of trust — like the one we are nurturing here today.

The second day, the Forum was opened with welcomes from Professor Peter Bonfield, OBE, Vice-Chancellor and President, University of Westminster, His Excellency Ravshan Usmanov, Uzbekistan's Ambassador to the United Kingdom and Denise Waddingham, Country Director of the British Council, Uzbekistan. We were also delighted to hear from Otabek Makhkamov, Deputy Minister for Higher Education, Science and Innovations of the Republic of Uzbekistan who provided some timely updates on developments in Uzbekistan, particularly in relation to quality assurance

The first session was chaired by Alison John, CEO of Advanced HE and looked at Ensuring excellence in university governance and quality assurance: lessons learnt and next steps. Panel members included representatives from the QAA UK, as well as those responsible for quality assurance in Uzbek institutions. It was particularly timely to hear from Adham Khudoykulov, the newly appointed Head of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education. The session identified key priorities for the higher education sector in Uzbekistan and also presented the outcomes and lessons learnt from initial pilots of the University Governance and Quality Standards Draft Codes. These initiatives emerged from the Uzbekistan-UK partnership work to strengthen capacity and pilot new co-created approaches. The session also discussed how institutions can measure the effectiveness of their continuous improvement policies around quality assurance and university governance and how they create a culture that encourages feedback and innovation.

The second session was on the theme of developing stronger Inclusive Higher Education partnerships between Uzbekistan and UK, chaired by Denise Waddingham, looked at key developments in inclusive higher education in Uzbekistan, and presented the report on the 'Inclusive University initiative' produced by the Working Group of the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovations. The Good Practice Guide produced by the group, which shares examples of partnership work to embed inclusion in university curriculum in Central Asia, will now be disseminated. The session also saw the launch of two new Disability Inclusion Partnership projects funded by the British Council and led by the University of East London (UEL) and the University of Westminster respectively.

The final session chaired by Dr Komiljon Karimov, Rector, WIUT and Stephen Wallis, Director of Transnational Education at Westminster looked at Uzbekistan-UK TNE collaborations: learning from good practice and supporting wider reforms in higher education. The session opened with a helpful update from Griff Ryan, Head of Transnational Education, UUKi on the global TNE landscape and its key features in Uzbekistan. This was followed by an update on the work of the newly established Uzbekistan TNE Good Practice Group. The session also included an update on a project looking at research collaborations in Uzbekistan. Day Two of the Forum ended with reflections from a student, Dono Abdurahmanova, President of the Uzbekistan's Student Union, UK.

In addition, the third day of the Forum was organised by the Uzbek Embassy in London in the format of a conversation between 50 Uzbekistan students studying in the UK under El-Yurt Umidi Scholarship programme and Deputy Minister of HE, Science and Innovations Otabek Mahkamov, Director of the National Quality Assurance Agency of Uzbekistan Adkham Khudaykulov and Deputy Director of the Agency for Social Protection Usmon Sharifkhodjaev. Discussion questions included: what it is that Uzbekistan students find beneficial and useful in UK education that they want Uzbekistan education system to adopt/learn from. Key suggested areas included quality assurance and quality enhancement, alignment of learning outcomes and assessment, university governance and disability inclusion.

Among key emerging themes from the final discussions during the Forum:

- The Forum has demonstrated the importance and benefits of student engagement in education reform and policy discussions; this good practice needs to be disseminated
- Graduate outcomes and employability of graduates are among most topical themes for education system in Uzbekistan, and globally.

- Drafts of Quality and Governance Codes developed in collaboration with the working groups under the Ministry of HE, Science and Innovations in partnership with the British Council and in collaboration with QAA and Advance HE need to be piloted further, induction and awareness raising programmes to be developed and then the documents to be adopted.
- Development of the national regulatory framework is one of the key strategic needs that will allow to bring together all the work around quality standards and university governance
- TNE development is one of the key areas of partnership between the UK and Uzbekistan; the focus needs to be on sustainability and scalability.
- Inclusion needs to be embedded in higher education offer and direct university partnerships are good ways to co-create new approaches and share good practice; Inclusive University Good Practice Guide is a useful tool the partnerships can use and develop further.
- CPD is central to education reform and Uzbekistan-UK partnership has led to new approaches relevant to the needs of teachers and learners in public education sector i Uzbekistan
- English language teaching and learning are important for strengthening TNE and other forms of international partnership in education; overall English is one of the core skills young people need.

Some observations and views from major UK and Uzbekistan stakeholders and organisers:

- Well managed planning process
- Well-coordinated delivery in 2 campuses
- Excellent teamwork and collaboration of all partners and stakeholders
- Excellent teamwork and contribution of all members of the organising committee
- Relevant/balanced programme, excellent speakers, diversity of opinions and perspectives
- Global/local issue in HE discussed
- Real/practical discussions, open exchanges of opinions
- Significant student engagement
- Excellent professional standards
- Smooth logistical arrangements
- It was in fact a 3-day event, the third day being students focused and hosted by the Uzbek Embassy in London (with key themes being QA, Inclusion, curriculum reform and assessment)
- Excellent food!

Key highlights from the Forum participant's survey.

Feedback from all Forum participants (via the survey) summarized below.

90% said that objective of the Forum was fully met.

90% said that the Forum brought together the right stakeholders to meet the objectives.

95% said the quality of the sessions and contributions were relevant and met your expectations.

90% said the Forum provided with networking opportunities to establish new links and partnerships.

95% said the Forum had a strong inclusion dimension.

All Forum programme and reference materials as well as speakers' presentations are on the website:

<https://conference.wiut.uz/uzukedu2025>

Quotes:

Adham Khudaykulov, Director, National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education

"Uzbek–UK ties are strong and firmly rooted in mutual respect and shared aspirations. UK education is a conscious and wholehearted choice for many Uzbeks, reflecting a deep trust in its quality and recognition of the many doors it opens. This partnership is a journey of change that shapes a future where knowledge knows no borders and ambition has no limits."

Professor Deborah Johnston and Professor Tara Dean, Interim Co-Vice-Chancellors, London South Bank University

"At London South Bank University, we believe education should be transformative—not just for individuals, but for communities and societies. Hosting this year's Forum is a powerful reminder of what we can achieve through genuine international partnerships. By working closely with our colleagues in Uzbekistan, we are deepening the exchange of knowledge, fostering innovation, and building an inclusive higher education system that prepares students to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world."

Denise Waddingham, British Council Country Director Uzbekistan said:

'We are delighted to be hosting the third edition of our Uzbekistan-UK Education Forum in London, in recognition of the growing interest in Central Asia from the UK sector. It is also a fantastic opportunity to bring leading Uzbekistani institutions and higher education leaders to the United Kingdom to explore and share best practice in higher education and to build even stronger partnerships.'

'Uzbekistan stands as a compelling partner for the UK in the internationalisation of higher education. We are delighted that in 2022-2023, almost 10,000 students in Uzbekistan were enrolled in UK transnational education (TNE) programmes, with this figure set to increase significantly as more UK programmes come on stream in the country.'

Peter Bonfield, the President and Vice-Chancellor, University of Westminster“

We are delighted to be jointly hosting the 3rd Uzbek-British Education Forum, the first to be held here in the UK. This milestone event celebrates our shared commitment to academic collaboration and builds on a proud 23-year relationship with Uzbekistan, and with Westminster International University in Tashkent in particular. Over the past two decades, we have worked closely to advance educational opportunities, cultural exchange, and mutual understanding — and this forum marks an exciting new chapter in that journey”