

UK-INDIA STUDENT MOBILITY: CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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UK-India Student Mobility: Challenges, Opportunities and Recommendations

Student mobility is essential pillar of the UK-India partnership, playing an important role in the globalisation of higher education and strengthening cultural and academic ties. The presence of Indian students in the UK enriches the learning environment, supports innovation, and deepens the broader relationship between the two countries.

This paper outlines the benefits that Indian students bring to the UK, examines the challenges they face, and offers recommendations to improve mobility and maximise these contributions. By enhancing accessibility and support, the UK can strengthen its position as a leading destination for global talent while furthering its academic and cultural ties with India.

Importantly, this paper also acknowledges the recent policy shifts, including the UK Government's Restoring Control over the Immigration System white paper (May 2025) , which introduces significant changes to international student routes such as adjustments to the Graduate Visa and sponsor compliance requirements. These developments make it even more critical to address the barriers and support structures that shape the Indian student experience in the UK.

Methodology

This paper has been prepared by the UK India Business Council (UKIBC) in collaboration with Quastels Legal Advisers.

The findings are based on a survey of UK universities, consultative roundtables with university representatives and students, and legal and policy recommendations. The data highlights both economic and non-economic contributions of Indian students, as well as barriers they face in visa processing, recognition of qualifications, and post-study work opportunities.

This paper will address the following areas: Economic and non-economic contributions, student visas, Recognition of Indian Qualifications, the Graduate Visa Route, Employer Sponsorship Challenges, and Strategies for Broadening Access and Strengthening Student Support.

¹ UK Home Office, Restoring Control Over the Immigration System, Policy Paper, April 2024.

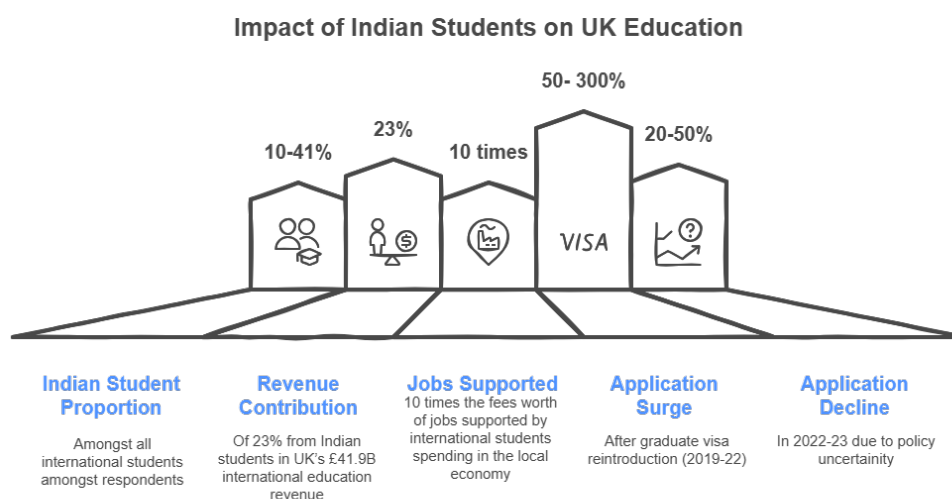
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Economic and Non-economic Contributions

Indian students make significant economic and cultural contributions to UK universities, benefiting both the institutions and the wider communities in which they are based.

In line with that, one respondent noted, “*Indian students account for approximately 35% of international students,*” while another stated, “*10% of our total student population consists of Indian students.*” Across responses, the significance of Indian students was clear, with their representation among international students ranging from 10% to 41% across universities that took part in the survey.

Respondents emphasised both economic and non-economic benefits from Indian students. Economically, they contribute through tuition fees and living expenses. One university noted, “Indian students are a major source of revenue,” benefiting local economies, especially in smaller UK towns where universities are key economic drivers. In the 2021–22 academic year, international students contributed £41.9 billion to the UK economy, with Indian students comprising approximately 23% of the 679,970 international students during that period. This influx supports job creation and economic growth across the country.



On the non-economic front, Indian students are recognised for their contributions to the cultural diversity of UK campuses. Beyond enriching campus diversity, the wider presence of Indian students also fosters cultural exchange and global engagement within local communities. In smaller university towns, their contributions extend beyond economic value, helping to promote

multicultural integration, stimulate local entrepreneurship, and strengthen ties between academic institutions and their surrounding regions. One respondent remarked, *“Indian students bring a variety of perspectives and enhance the global outlook of our student community,”* while another highlighted their academic impact, stating, *“[Indian students] contribute significantly to academic discourse and international engagement.”*

Another respondent said, *“The diverse perspectives brought by Indian students enrich the learning environment,”* while another noted, *“They help foster global awareness and multicultural understanding.”*

In summary:

- Indian students form a significant portion of international enrolments, with their representation varying across institutions, typically ranging from 10% to 41% of total international students.
- Their presence enhances cultural diversity and brings unique perspectives to academic discussions.
- Economically, Indian students contribute substantially through tuition fees and living expenses, benefiting local economies, particularly in smaller UK towns where universities play a key economic role.
- In the 2021–22 academic year alone, international students contributed £41.9 billion to the UK economy, with Indian students making up approximately 23% of new international enrolments.

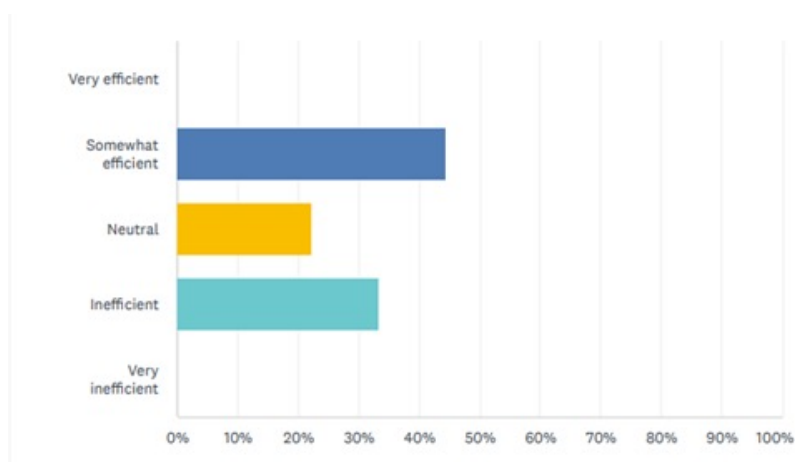
Enhancing the Student Visa Process and Access

The student visa process plays a crucial role in facilitating student mobility to the UK, impacting both accessibility and the overall student experience.

Survey responses about the student visa process were mixed, with several respondents noting improvements over time but still highlighting areas where improvement was needed.

Question 1: How would you describe the student visa application process for Indian students?

Figure 1:



As shown in Figure 1, respondents were almost evenly divided in their views on the efficiency of the student visa application process, with some finding it “efficient” and others considering it “inefficient.” Many respondents stressed the need for a more student-friendly visa process, particularly during peak application periods. Students often face considerable stress, having to make life-changing decisions amid uncertainty over whether their visa will arrive on time.

Visa processing times remain a key concern, with respondents highlighting delays in the verification of financial documents, particularly those from Indian banks. As one respondent noted, *“There are often delays in the verification of financial documents, especially with Indian banks,”* while another stated, *“There are issues with financial documents from Indian banks being accepted, leading to delays.”*

Summarising the overall sentiment, one respondent described the visa process as “generally smooth but in need of more streamlined documentation requirements and faster processing times.” Addressing these challenges would help reduce stress for students and ensure they do not miss critical milestones such as orientation or their first day of classes.

Improving the efficiency and accessibility of the UK’s student visa process is essential to maintaining the country’s global competitiveness in higher education. As one of the largest cohorts of international

students in the UK, Indian nationals face unique procedural challenges—particularly with respect to financial documentation and visa processing timelines. Addressing these friction points would significantly improve the applicant experience and support the UK’s efforts to attract and retain top international talent. Further, simplifying bureaucratic processes—such as implementing a seasonal fast-track service and introducing standardised, trusted templates for financial documentation—could markedly enhance the student experience. Collaborating with a list of pre-approved Indian financial institutions would minimise the need for repeated verifications and create a more transparent, applicant-friendly system.

Policy and Legal Framework:

The recommendations below are made with reference to the UK’s immigration system as set out in:

- Appendix ST: Student of the Immigration Rules; and
- The Home Office Student Route Caseworker Guidance.

These sources provide the operational and legal basis for student visa decision-making. However, gaps in interpretation and practice—particularly in relation to Indian applicants—warrant targeted policy adjustments.

Recommendations for Improvement

To enhance clarity, reduce processing delays, and improve overall applicant experience, the following measures are recommended:

- Introduce a seasonal priority processing route for Indian nationals applying between May and September. This would reflect peak application periods and help mitigate uncertainty and late arrivals.
- Standardise financial documentation requirements by co-designing a template with UKVI and Indian financial institutions. This would ensure consistency in format, improve transparency for applicants, and reduce the risk of refusal on technical grounds.
- Establish a list of recognised Indian financial institutions whose documentation would be accepted without further verification, creating greater certainty and reducing administrative burden.

- Enhance training for Entry Clearance Officers and caseworkers to ensure better interpretation of Indian financial evidence and improve consistency in decision-making.

Why These Measures Matter

Survey respondents reported that delays and rejections—often caused by unfamiliarity with Indian banking practices—lead to avoidable stress, missed course start dates, and reputational damage to the UK as a study destination. Standardising documentation and streamlining seasonal processing would significantly reduce refusal rates and increase applicant confidence in the UK’s visa system.

International Benchmarking

The UK may consider adapting elements of Australia’s Simplified Student Visa Framework (SSVF), which employs an evidence-level model to assess institutional risk and streamline documentation for applicants from trusted education providers and financial institutions. Such a model could help reduce unnecessary documentation for low-risk applicants and enable more efficient use of UKVI resources.

Enhancing Recognition of Indian Academic Qualifications

In addition to improving the visa process, respondents emphasised the need for clearer and more consistent recognition of Indian academic qualifications. While India is one of the UK’s largest international student markets, students and universities alike report persistent ambiguity regarding how Indian qualifications are assessed during the admissions and visa processes. This uncertainty can lead to delays, inconsistent outcomes, or even incorrect ineligibility decisions—ultimately discouraging qualified applicants and complicating CAS issuance for institutions.

Policy and Legal Framework

Recognition of academic qualifications falls within the broader immigration and admissions framework, particularly:

- Appendix ST: Academic Requirements under the UK Immigration Rules; and
- The UK ENIC (formerly UK NARIC) recognition framework, which evaluates international qualifications against UK standards.

These legal references guide visa officers and higher education institutions in determining whether an applicant's qualifications meet the necessary threshold. However, a more transparent and coordinated approach—especially between UK and Indian education authorities—is essential to address recurring challenges. Establishing a formal UK-India Mutual Recognition Agreement, akin to frameworks seen in Australia or Canada, would institutionalise qualification equivalencies and eliminate unnecessary confusion. Alongside this, publishing a clear, standardised equivalency table—mapping Indian academic achievements directly against UK benchmarks—would provide certainty to both applicants and admissions teams.

Recommendations for Improvement

To streamline admissions and support a more predictable, fair system for Indian applicants, the following steps are proposed:

- Develop a bilateral UK-India Qualifications Recognition Framework, involving regulatory bodies such as Ofqual, UK ENIC, India's University Grants Commission (UGC), and the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE). This partnership would enable regular dialogue and harmonisation of qualification standards between the two countries.
- Establish and publish standard equivalency tables between UK and Indian school boards and higher education institutions. These should be made publicly accessible through the UKVI and UK ENIC websites, offering guidance to both admissions teams and applicants.
- Create a centralised, publicly available list of recognised Indian degree-awarding bodies and school boards, alongside mapped equivalency levels for smoother admissions processing and visa assessments.

Why This Matters

Ambiguities around Indian academic qualifications result in unnecessary administrative delays, misinterpretation by caseworkers, and anxiety for applicants. A standardised recognition model would provide much-needed clarity for universities, visa officials, and prospective students—enabling faster, fairer decisions and building long-term trust in the UK's international education offer.

International Benchmarking

Countries such as Germany and Canada provide strong examples of effective qualification recognition systems. Germany's *Anabin* platform and Canada's WES system offer transparent, publicly accessible equivalency data, including detailed mappings of Indian degrees. Adopting a similar model would align the UK with international best practices and reinforce its reputation as a welcoming, reliable destination for Indian students.

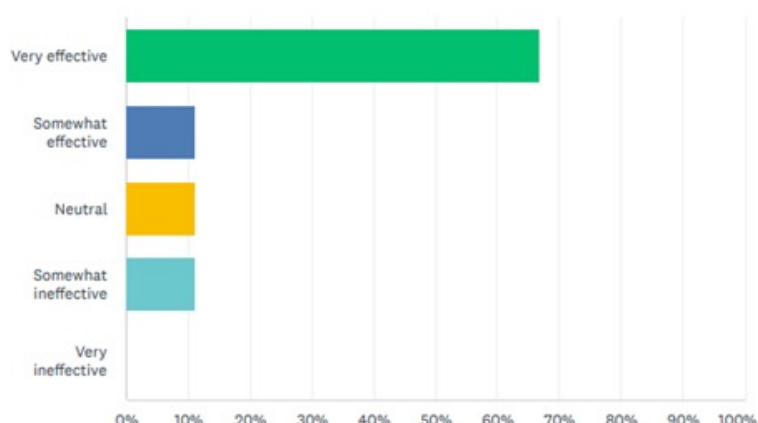
The Graduate Visa Route

The Graduate Visa route enables international students to remain in the UK for up to two years post-study (or three years for doctoral graduates), offering them valuable work experience while providing employers with access to skilled talent.

As Figures 2 and 3 illustrate, the Graduate Visa route is essential to the ability of UK universities to attract Indian students in an increasingly competitive global landscape.

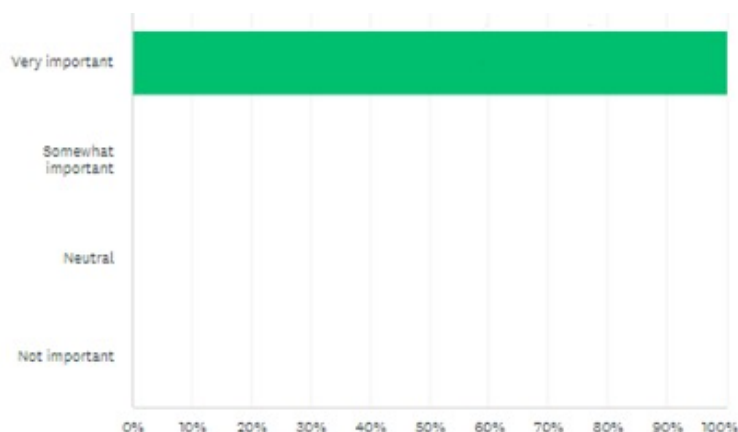
Question 2: How effective is the graduate visa route for supporting your graduates' employment prospects in the UK?

Figure 2:



Question 3: How important is the graduate route visa in attracting Indian applications to your university?

Figure 3:



The UK faces growing competition from countries such as the US, Australia, and Canada, all of which offer various incentives to attract Indian students.

While the United States, Canada, and Australia continue to be popular destinations for Indian students, recent policy changes in each have introduced new complexities that could affect their long-term appeal. The US remains home to globally renowned universities and offers valuable post-study work options such as the STEM OPT extension. However, evolving immigration policies and heightened visa scrutiny have created some uncertainty among prospective applicants. Canada continues to offer quality education and a clear route to permanent residency, yet recent measures—such as a temporary cap on study permits and new eligibility restrictions on post-graduation work rights—may affect international student mobility. Similarly, Australia has introduced changes to student visa financial requirements and eligibility for onshore applications, which may influence students' decision-making. Against this backdrop, there is a significant opportunity for the UK to strengthen its position as a preferred destination by offering a stable, transparent, and supportive environment for Indian students.

Meanwhile, countries like Germany and France are also intensifying their efforts to attract Indian students by offering low or no tuition fees, English-taught programmes, and robust funding options, positioning themselves as emerging education hubs.

Strengthening the Graduate visa route will make the UK more attractive to Indian students and support long-term economic collaboration between the two nations. To fully realise these benefits, it is crucial to establish structured transition pathways from post-study visas to long-term skilled employment. Developing formal Graduate-to-Skilled Worker transition schemes would offer graduates a clear route to settlement, strengthening the UK's attractiveness relative to global competitors. This is in alignment with what is observed in the survey responses. The Graduate Visa route was widely regarded as essential to attracting Indian students. Respondents overwhelmingly supported the scheme, with one stating, *"The reintroduction of the Graduate Visa has led to a significant uptick in applications,"* and another that *"The visa route is a key selling point for Indian students who want to gain international work experience after their studies."*

However, concerns were raised about the limited support students receive in converting the Graduate Visa to a Skilled Worker visa. One respondent commented, *"Many UK employers are reluctant to hire graduates on the Graduate Visa as they will need sponsorship after two years."* Another respondent suggested that *"more career support is needed to help students transition from the Graduate Visa to longer-term employment options."* Recommendations for improvement included extending the duration of the Graduate Visa to match the typical recruitment cycle and providing more extensive support for job placements. One response noted that *"two years is sometimes insufficient for students to find permanent employment, particularly for those in sectors requiring longer lead times."*

The survey responses reveal varied impacts on student applications linked to changes in the UK's visa policies over the years. Following the removal of the graduate route visa scheme in 2012, respondents indicated significant declines in applications, with estimates ranging from 50% to 70%. Overall, the data suggests that the policy change had a considerable negative impact on applications.

In contrast, the re-launch of the Post-Study Work (PSW) visa in 2019 led to a substantial increase in applications, although growth varied widely across universities. Estimates ranged from 50% to over 300%, with some respondents describing *"exponential growth."* One respondent noted that while growth started in 2019, the pandemic delayed the full effect until 2021, when applications doubled. Despite the varied figures, the overall trend indicates a significant surge in interest from prospective students following the reinstatement of the Graduate Route Visa.

However, in the 2023–24 academic year, applications again declined, with respondents attributing this downturn to uncertainty caused by UK Government statements questioning the continuation of the Graduate Route Visa PSW scheme. Reported drops ranged from 20% to 50%, with notable impacts at both postgraduate and undergraduate levels. These responses suggest that student demand is highly sensitive to policy uncertainty, with the largest declines reaching up to 50%, reflecting the potential negative influence of unclear government communication.

While the route has been widely welcomed for providing post-study work opportunities, stakeholders highlight that its current structure—particularly the two-year duration and limitations in transitioning to long-term employment—does not fully support the ambitions of graduates or the needs of the UK economy.

This context is particularly important in light of the UK Government’s Restoring Control over the Immigration System white paper (May 2025), which outlines proposed reforms to the Graduate Route. These include tightening eligibility criteria and increasing sponsor accountability. While the Government’s intent to enhance compliance is understandable, such changes—if not accompanied by clear, supportive pathways into skilled employment—may risk deterring high-calibre international students. Therefore, it is timely and essential to not only preserve the Graduate Route but also reform it to better align with student needs and UK economic priorities.

Policy and Legal Framework

The Graduate Route is governed by:

- *Appendix Graduate*, Immigration Rules
- *Home Office Guidance: Graduate Route*
- For transitions into long-term work: *Appendix Skilled Worker and Sponsor Duties under the Worker and Temporary Worker guidance*

Key Recommendations for Reform

1. Extend the Graduate Route Duration

- o Increase the visa validity from two to three years for all graduates, not just PhD holders.
- o This would align with international norms and better match UK graduate job cycles, particularly in sectors with longer recruitment and training pathways.

2. Introduce a Graduate-to-Skilled Worker Transition Scheme

- o Allow a structured bridge from the Graduate Route to the Skilled Worker visa, with streamlined processes and reduced sponsorship requirements—especially during the graduate's first role.
- o Prioritise critical sectors such as health, STEM, artificial intelligence, and advanced manufacturing.

3. Launch a University-Endorsed Graduate Pathway

- o Develop an endorsement scheme similar to the Global Talent Visa, enabling universities to support high-achieving Indian graduates in securing employment in high-growth areas.
- o This would reward academic excellence and strengthen the pipeline of global talent into the UK's innovation economy.

4. Address Employer Sponsorship Barriers

- o Pilot a Skilled Worker Graduate Route for early-career Indian graduates, offering relaxed salary thresholds or simplified sponsorship criteria.
- o Introduce incentives for SMEs and regional employers to hire international graduates, such as lower sponsorship fees and fast-tracked licence approvals.
- o Equip employers—particularly those unfamiliar with sponsorship—with targeted guidance and toolkits developed jointly by UKVI and the Department for Education. Such initiatives should be accompanied by nationwide employer outreach campaigns to raise awareness of the sponsorship process, debunk misconceptions about hiring international graduates, and promote the long-term economic advantages of a diverse workforce.

5. Strengthen Monitoring and Evaluation of Student Mobility

- o Establish an annual UK-India student mobility dashboard to track key indicators such as enrolment trends, visa outcomes, and post-study employment.
- o Implement bilateral scorecards co-developed by UK and Indian authorities to assess progress against agreed mobility targets and inform policy adjustments.
- o Conduct annual pulse surveys of Indian students and UK employers to gather feedback and identify emerging challenges and opportunities.

Why This Matters

An 18 month visa often does not align with the timeframes graduates need to secure suitable

employment, particularly in competitive or regulated industries. These improvements would ensure the UK can retain the global talent it trains, increase return on investment for both students and institutions, and enhance the UK's appeal as a destination of choice.

Global Comparisons

- Canada offers up to three years of post-study work rights under the Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP), with straightforward employer access.
- Australia's Temporary Graduate visa similarly provides longer, more flexible post-study options, contributing to their growing attractiveness among Indian students.

By enhancing the Graduate Route and supporting smoother transitions into long-term employment, the UK can consolidate its competitive position in international education and deepen its talent pipeline—particularly from strategic partner countries like India.

Broadening Access and Strengthening Student Support

Beyond visa and employment considerations, expanding outreach, financial support, and student welfare initiatives is essential to making the UK a more attractive and inclusive destination for Indian students. Survey respondents highlighted the need for targeted efforts to engage students from Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, increase scholarship opportunities, and provide stronger integration and mental health support.

A recurring theme in the responses was the need for greater outreach and engagement with potential students from India. One respondent suggested that universities should focus more on attracting students from Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities in India, stating, *“There is a lot of untapped potential in smaller cities where students are eager for global exposure.”*

Several respondents also called for more financial assistance and scholarships to reduce the financial barriers faced by Indian students. One remarked, “Expanding scholarship opportunities could help attract a more diverse range of Indian students,” while another noted that “there is a need to reduce the financial burden, especially in terms of visa fees and living costs.”

In terms of barriers, the most frequently cited were visa processing issues, high tuition fees, and a lack of comprehensive career support for graduates. One university stated, “Without clear post-study pathways, we risk losing top talent back to India or other countries.”

To address these challenges, targeted initiatives can enhance student support, improve integration, and expand opportunities for Indian students in the UK.

Enhancing Culturally Responsive Mental Health and Integration Support

Policy Context:

While not explicitly mandated under immigration legislation, responsibilities around student welfare are embedded within the Student Sponsor Guidance and reinforced by the Higher Education Code of Practice. These frameworks outline pastoral care duties and provide scope for institutions to adopt best practices in supporting international students' well-being.

Recommendations:

- Encourage higher education providers to embed culturally responsive mental health services tailored to the needs of Indian students, addressing challenges such as stigma, academic pressure, and homesickness. This should include multilingual counselling services and access to peer support networks. For consistency and accountability, mental health and integration support should also be formally embedded within institutional compliance expectations under the Student Sponsor Guidance. Institutions could be encouraged to report annually on key metrics, such as international student counselling uptake, peer mentorship participation rates, and satisfaction levels with pastoral care services.
- Promote structured cultural orientation programmes and peer mentoring initiatives through UKRI, student unions, and Indian student societies to support smoother adjustment to UK academic and social life.
- Include international student well-being as a criterion in sponsor licence compliance reviews, with annual institutional reporting on support measures provided to international cohorts.

Why This Matters:

Indian students often face unique cultural and emotional challenges when transitioning to the UK, which can impact retention, academic performance, and overall satisfaction. By investing in integration and tailored well-being strategies, institutions not only fulfil their compliance obligations but also enhance student experience—strengthening the UK's global reputation through positive word-of-mouth in key source countries.

Global Comparison:

Countries such as Canada and New Zealand have embedded well-being metrics into their international education frameworks, setting a benchmark for integrating mental health and inclusion as core components of student support.

Expand Scholarships and Outreach to Tier 2 and Tier 3 Cities

Recommendations:

- Establish joint UK-India scholarship initiatives that target underrepresented regions and priority sectors, such as expanded Chevening-Plus or GREAT-STEM programmes. These schemes could help increase access for high-potential students from non-metropolitan areas while advancing key skills agendas. Building regional scholarship targets into bilateral education cooperation agreements would ensure sustained focus on Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities. Incentivising partnerships between UK universities and reputable Indian secondary schools and colleges in these areas would help create a structured, sustainable talent pipeline.
- Enhance digital outreach and virtual admissions support in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities—including locations such as Indore, Coimbatore, and Bhubaneswar—to ensure that prospective students from across India can access accurate, timely guidance regardless of geography. In addition, investing in flexible online and blended degree pathways—such as 1+1 articulation models, where students study one year online and one year in the UK—would expand access to high-quality UK education while accommodating regional affordability and mobility constraints.
- Online and blended learning models can help bridge the accessibility gap for students from Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities by providing flexible, affordable pathways to UK education without the immediate need for relocation. These approaches not only enable students to upskill and gain international exposure from their hometowns, but also serve as a stepping stone to physical mobility, increasing preparedness and confidence for those considering on-campus study in the UK.

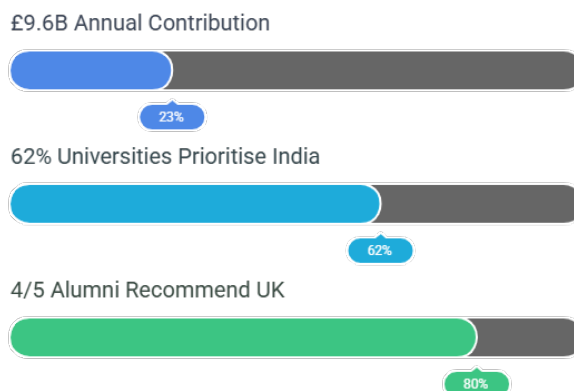
Why this matters:

Students from smaller cities often face information gaps and access barriers despite strong academic potential. Targeted scholarships and regionally inclusive outreach efforts would promote greater equity, broaden the talent pool, and strengthen the UK's position as a welcoming and globally engaged education destination.

Concluding Recommendations for Strengthening UK-India Student Mobility

UK Universities have a high value proposition for Indian students offering some unique advantages:

UK's Strategic Advantage in Attracting Indian Students



In light of the insights gathered from the survey and the evolving needs of Indian students, it is clear that a more streamlined, supportive, and inclusive approach is essential for maintaining the UK's competitiveness as a destination for global talent. Addressing challenges related to visa processes, qualification recognition, financial accessibility, and student well-being will not only enhance the experience for Indian students but also strengthen the broader UK-India educational partnership. To capitalise on these opportunities, the following recommendations for both the UK government and universities are proposed, aimed at streamlining processes, improving support systems, and ensuring greater accessibility for Indian students, thereby deepening the UK-India academic and cultural ties.

Recommendations for the Government:

- **Streamlining Visa Processes:** Simplify visa requirements, particularly regarding financial verification and documentation from Indian banks, to facilitate a smoother application process for Indian students.
- **Ensure Policy Stability and Predictability:** In light of the Restoring Control over the Immigration System White Paper (May 2025), it is vital that any changes to the Graduate Visa route or broader student migration policies are communicated with clarity, advance notice, and stakeholder consultation. Sudden shifts or uncertainty can deter prospective students and undermine the UK's competitiveness in international education.
- **Recognising Indian Qualifications:** Align UK and Indian qualification frameworks more clearly to streamline the admissions process and ensure that Indian students' credentials are recognised and valued.
- **Expanding Graduate Visa Benefits:** Extend the duration of post-study work visas and provide enhanced support to aid students in transitioning to long-term employment opportunities.
- **Joint UK-India Scholarship Programs:** Expand on existing initiatives such as the Chevening and GREAT Scholarships by creating a joint UK-India scholarship programme focused on key sectors like STEM, AI, sustainability, and healthcare. Combining UK university funding with Indian government support would increase accessibility for students from a diverse range of economic backgrounds.

Recommendations for Universities:

- **Enhancing Scholarship Opportunities:** Expand the range and accessibility of scholarships to attract a broader, more diverse pool of high-potential students from across India, particularly from underrepresented Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities.
- **Improving Career Support:** Strengthen career services tailored to international students' needs, offering personalised guidance, networking opportunities, and employability workshops to help Indian students successfully transition into the UK workforce.

- **Tailored Mental Health and Well-Being Support:** Develop mental health services that are culturally responsive, addressing the unique challenges faced by Indian students, such as stigma, homesickness, and academic pressure. Providing workshops or one-on-one counselling designed for international students will ensure their well-being is prioritised and help them integrate more effectively into university life.
- **Manage Student Expectations Responsibly:** Take proactive responsibility for setting realistic and transparent expectations for Indian students regarding academic experiences, career prospects, and life in the UK. Marketing, admissions communication, and student support services should avoid overstating outcomes and instead offer honest, culturally sensitive information that empowers students to make informed decisions and promotes trust, satisfaction, and long-term goodwill.

SUMMARY TABLE

POLICY	AREA RECOMMENDATION	RATIONALE / IMPACT	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
Visa processing	Seasonal priority processing for Indian applicants (May–Sep) Standardise financial documentation with Indian banks	Reduces late arrivals and stress during peak periods Minimises refusals, speeds up processing	UKVI, Indian Banks UKVI, Indian Banks
Qualifications recognition	Develop UK-India Qualifications Recognition Framework	Ensures clarity and faster admission decisions	UK ENIC, UGC, AICTE, Ofqual
Graduate route	Extend Graduate Route visa from 2 to 3 years for all graduates	Aligns with competitors, attracts more students	Home Office, UKVI
Employer sponsorship	Pilot relaxed sponsorship criteria for early-career Indian graduates	Increases employability, encourages SMEs to hire international talent	Home Office, Employers
Student support wellbeing	Embed culturally responsive mental health and integration services	Boosts retention, satisfaction, and academic success	Universities, Student Unions
Scholarships & outreach	Expand joint UK-India scholarships for Tier 2/3 cities and key sectors	Broadens access, diversifies student pool	UK Govt, Indian Govt, Universities

Conclusion: Strengthening UK-India Student Mobility

The UK-India student mobility relationship presents a strategic opportunity for both economic development and the enhancement of soft power. As the global education landscape becomes increasingly competitive, the UK must embrace policy agility, regulatory clarity, and legal certainty to sustain its appeal to Indian students. This goes beyond mere compliance; it is essential for enabling the free movement of talent and ensuring the UK's continued leadership in global education. Student mobility plays a pivotal role in the UK-India educational partnership, fostering significant cultural exchange and economic benefits. By implementing the recommendations outlined in this paper, such as streamlining visa processes, expanding scholarship opportunities, and improving post-study career pathways, UK universities can strengthen their attractiveness to Indian students. This, in turn, will deepen educational ties and contribute to long-term economic and social cooperation between the UK and India in an increasingly interconnected world. As the UK Government considers adjustments to international student policy, as outlined in the Restoring Control over the Immigration System white paper (May 2025), it is more important than ever to ensure that reforms support, rather than restrict, the mobility and long-term potential of Indian students. Clear, student-centred policy design will be key to maintaining the UK's reputation as a welcoming and globally competitive education destination.

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UK INDIA

BUSINESS COUNCIL

The UK India Business Council is a strategic advisory and policy advocacy organisation with a mission to support businesses with the insights, networks, policy advocacy, services, and facilities needed to succeed in the UK and India. We believe passionately that the UK-India partnership creates jobs and growth in both countries, and that UK and Indian businesses have ideas, technology, services and products that can succeed in India and the UK respectively.

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LEGAL ADVISERS

Quastels is a boutique law firm advising clients at the intersection of mobility, investment, and cross-border strategy. Our India Desk, alongside our broader immigration, real estate, corporate, and private client practices, works with globally minded individuals and institutions shaping the future across jurisdictions. This paper reflects our conviction that legal frameworks must evolve to meet the ambitions of a world in motion—and that thoughtfully designed mobility is not only a tool for growth, but a cornerstone of resilient international partnerships.