

# UK universities should expect growth from emerging student populations

October 12, 2022 UB

*‘China and India remain dominant markets but there is strong growth from Nigeria, Pakistan and the US ‘*

Emerging markets are having a notable influence on the UK’s international student population, according to a [new report from ApplyBoard](#).

Research from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), reveals the number of people studying in the UK from overseas increased by more than a third (34%) from 2016/2017 to 2020/21, showing just how desirable the UK is as a study abroad destination.

Of the international students choosing to study in the UK, China and India remain the most dominant markets, however there is strong growth from countries such as Nigeria, Pakistan and the US.

In fact, for many years, students from China have accounted for the highest percentage of international students studying in the UK. However, recent government data has revealed India has overtaken China as the number one country of origin granted sponsored study visas for the UK in the year ending June 2022.

Meti Basiri, co-founder and CMO of ApplyBoard said: “It’s interesting to see a shift when it comes to the country having the biggest impact on the UK’s international student scene. However, it’s important to note that China and India are home to the largest populations around the world, meaning they will always have a huge influence on the international student market. It’s important that UK institutions aren’t over reliant on one or two countries, so the data in our new report paints a promising picture when it comes to emerging markets.”

There are other emerging markets which have a considerable impact on the UK’s international student population.

The number of Pakistani nationals granted sponsored UK study visas grew by 377% in the year ending June 2022, versus calendar year 2019. This means Pakistan is now the UK’s fourth-largest market for sponsored study visas granted, having grown from just over 4,900 students in 2019 to almost 23,500 in the year ending June 2022.

It’s a similar story for Nigerian students – there were just under 8,400 Nigerian students granted sponsored study visas in 2019, and this number grew by 686%, to over 65,900 students, in the year ending June 2022.

## **The top 5 non-EU nationalities granted sponsored study visas, year ending June 2022 were:**

1. India
2. China
3. Nigeria
4. Pakistan
5. United States

## **The top 5 EU nationalities granted sponsored study visas, year ending June 2022 were:**

1. France
2. Germany
3. Spain
4. Italy
5. Greece

“It’s encouraging to see growth in these countries as diversification is essential to future proof the UK’s international study sector,” adds Meti.

New research conducted among ApplyBoard’s recruitment partners reveals they believe the UK is the most open and welcoming to international students, with almost all (92%) saying this is the case. Further to this, when asked whether the country is safe and stable for international students, recruitment partners placed the UK third (87%) behind Canada (98%) and Australia (90%). What’s more, over three quarters (77%) believe the way the UK handled the pandemic has made the country a more attractive study destination.

When it comes to what is important to those exploring study opportunities overseas, ApplyBoard’s recruitment partners believe post-study work opportunities in the destination is the most important factor.

### Three most important factors when choosing where to study

1. Post-study work opportunities (90%)
2. Cost of studying in the country (90%)
3. Visa processing times/approval rates (86%)

“A student population which is made up of learners from all over the world, helps add new perspectives to the classroom and creates a stronger learning environment for all. It’s also helpful for the UK to continue to appeal to and prioritise emerging student populations to –attract top talent and quality students from around the world. This will also help to support the UK’s economy and labour market,” adds Meti.

To find out more about the new analysis from ApplyBoard, review the full ‘How Can Diversifying the UK’s International Student Community Future Proof Learning for All?’ report here: [www.applyboard.com/applyinsights-article/uk-report-how-can-diversifying-the-uks-international-student-community-future-proof-learning-for-all](http://www.applyboard.com/applyinsights-article/uk-report-how-can-diversifying-the-uks-international-student-community-future-proof-learning-for-all)

You might also be interested in: [Braverman comments on international students draw fierce criticism](#)

